

Message Text

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MILITARY ADDRESSEES FOR POLADS

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TAGS: PINT

SUBJECT: PROSPECTS FOR THE NORTHRHINE-WESTPHALIAN (NRW)

LAND ELECTIONS ON MAY 4, 1975 -III

REF: DUESSELDORF 1122 OF DECEMBER 17, 1974 - I

DUESSELDORF 0323 OF MARCH 26, 1975 -II

1. DISCUSSIONS WITH A NUMBER OF POLITICAL LEADERS, RECENT PUBLIC OPINION POLLS, AND THE GENERAL ATMOSPHERE SUGGEST TO US THE CLOSEST OF ELECTIONS ON SUNDAY WITH THE SPD/FDP JUST SQUEAKING THROUGH. THERE ARE A NUMBER OF UNPREDICTABLE FACTORS OPERATIVE, HOWEVER, WHICH COULD BRING ABOUT A DIFFERENT RESULT.

2. THE MOST SIGNIFICANT POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT OF RECENT

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MONTHS HAS BEEN THE REMARKABLE RECOVERY OF THE FDP. AT

THE END OF LAST YEAR, ONLY THE BRASHEST AMONG THE FDP LEADERS WERE CONFIDENT OF CLEARING THE FIVE PERCENT HURDLE. TODAY THE FDP IN NRW COULD GARNER AS MUCH AS SEVEN PERCENT.

3. CDU LAND CHAIRMAN KOEPLER HAS CAMPAIGNED WITH VIGOR, BUT THE ABSENCE OF AN AGREED CHANCELLOR CANDIDATE HAS HANDICAPPED THE PARTY. ON BALANCE, CSU CHAIRMAN STRAUSS' APPEARANCES PROBABLY HURT THE CDU AND, WHILE CDU CHAIRMAN KOHL'S PERFORMANCES WERE A PLEASANT SURPRISE, THEY DID NOT COMPENSATE FOR STRAUSS' GAFFES. FORMER CDU CHAIRMAN BARZEL HAS BEEN A VERY EFFECTIVE CAMPAIGNER AND IS CLEARLY ON THE COMBACK TRAIL. THE PARTY'S DISAPPOINTING PERFORMANCE SCHLESWIG-HOLSTEIN HAS CAST ITS SHADOW ON THE CAMPAIGN IN NRW AND THE BUOYANT OPTIMISM OF A FEW MONTHS AGO IS GONE.

4. THE MOST RECENT POLLS (APRIL 28) THAT WE HAVE SEEN ARE THAT OF THE BILD-ZEITUNG AND A SPECIAL ONE BY THE CDU AND THEY ARE ALMOST IDENTICAL. BILD GIVES THE CDU 49.2 PERCENT, THE SPD 43.6, AND THE FDP 7.2. THE CDU POLS GIVE THE CDU 49.4 PERCENT, THE SPD 43.3 AND THE FDP 7.3.

5. THUS, WE HAVE A NECK AND NECK RACE, WITH THE COLAITION POSSESSING A VERY NARROW LEAD, BUT WITH A NUMBER OF HURDLES OF UNCERTAIN DIFFICULTY.

A. THE EFFECT, IF ANY, OF THE RECENT EVENTS IN STOCKHOLM HAS HAD WIDELY DIVERGENT INTERPRETATIONS. OUR OWN GUESS IS THAT, GIVEN THE OUTCOME AND THE GOVERNMENT'S PERFORAMANCE, STOCKHOLM HAS PROBABLY HAD LITTLE EFFECT.

B. ANOTHER UNCERTAINTY IS THE IMPACT OF THIS HOLIDAY WEEKEND IN WHICH RECORD NUMBERS HAVE TAKEN FRIDAY OFF IN ORDER TO HAVE A FOUR-DAY VACATION. THE CONVENTIONAL WISDOM IS THAT THIS, FOR RATHER OBSCURE REASONS, FAVORS THE CDU. OUR OWN GUESS IS THAT THE HOLIDAY PROBABLY DOES NOT FAVOR EITHER PARTY. IT IS INTERESTING TO NOTE IN THIS CONNECTION THAT POSTAL BALLOTS HAVE BEEN UTILIZED IN RECORD NUMBERS.

C. A MAJOR UNCERTAINTY IS THE REACTION OF THE VOTERS
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TO THE CURRENT ECONOMIC SITUATION. THE VW CLOSURES AND THE PROGNOSIS OF THE ECONOMIC PUNDITS DO NOT SEEM TO HAVE GENERATED MUCH PUBLIC DISCUSSION. HOWEVER, THE ANNOUNCEMENT YESTERDAY OF SHORT TIME AT BOTH KRUPP AT RHEINHAUSEN AND GERRESHEIMER GLASS IN DUESSELDORF MAY GIVE NEW EMPHASIS TO THE VOTERS PERCEPTION OF HIS ECONOMIC FUTURE AND COULD WORK TO THE DISADVANTAGE OF THE COALITION PARTIES.

6. EVEN AFTER GIVING DUE WEIGHT TO THE UNPREDICTABLE
FACTORS NOTED ABOVE, OUR CONVERSATIONS WITH SEVERAL
LEADING POLITICIANS IN THE PAST FEW DAYS PLUS THE ATMOSPHERE
OF THE CAMPAIGN SUGGEST TO US THAT THE PROBABLY OUTCOME
WILL BE THE NARROWEST OF VICTORIES FOR THE SPD/FDP. A BARE
MAJORITY OF TWO SEATS IN THE LANDTAG MAY WELL BE THE MARGIN.
HENNEMEYER

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